

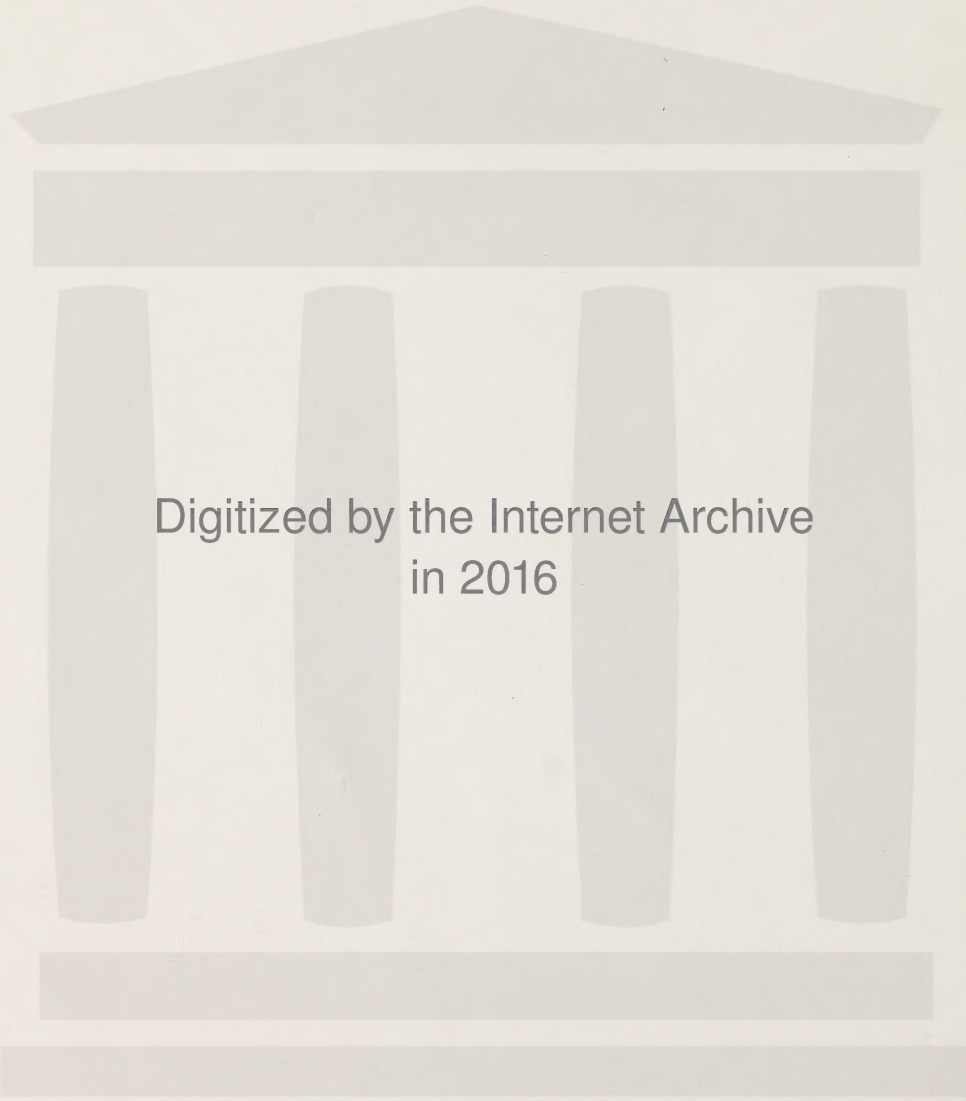
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# GUIDE TO SETTING UP A CAREER RESOURCE CENTRE



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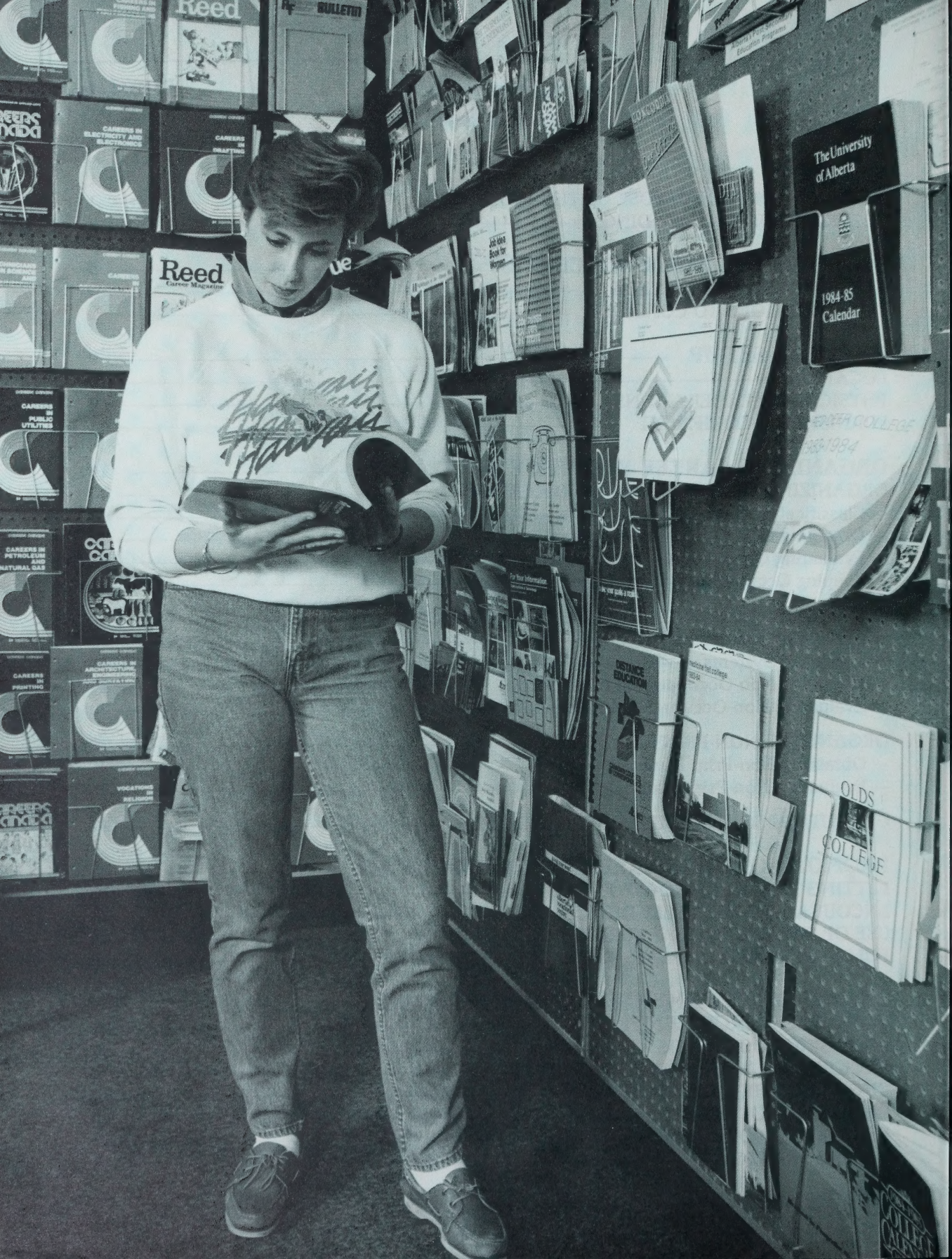
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# WHERE TO START

## Deciding on the Purpose of the Resource Centre

In today's rapidly changing employment scene, career practitioners and their clients need ever-increasing amounts of accurate, up-to-date career resource materials that are easy to locate and use.

All career development theorists emphasize the importance of good quality career information as one of the key elements in helping people make sound career choices. An effective Career Resource Centre should be able to provide its users with the information they need in the most usable formats possible. Informed Resource Centre staff should also be able to assist career planners with this crucial career information search phase of career planning.

When considering setting up a Career Resource Centre, you must first clearly identify its purpose and client group. Knowing who your clients are and their information needs will provide you with a solid foundation for going ahead. Obtaining the right resource materials, equipment, and staff will depend on this careful pre-planning.

The following questions are suggested as guidelines for a formal (that is, typed and distributed to selected groups of potential users) or informal (to be asked at staff meetings or in class) needs assessment survey:

1. Why do we want this Resource Centre?
  - to meet information needs not already met by other facilities
  - to supplement related facilities already in existence
2. Who will be the main users of this Resource Centre?
  - high school students
  - college/university students
  - employed people seeking career changes
  - immigrants with special language needs
  - career planning professionals
  - unemployed adults
3. What are their specific information needs?
  - out-of-province/country employment and education information
  - alternative work schedule possibilities
  - grade eight or lower reading level
  - current theoretical discussions on career development
  - information on the competition process within government
  - dated information for research purposes (directories, annual reports, periodicals, etc.)
  - education/training (provincial, national, international information):
    - apprenticeship programs
    - calendars — college, university, technical/vocational institutions
    - continuing education courses
    - correspondence/distance education
    - directories
  - financial assistance:
    - bursaries
    - scholarships
    - student finance
  - employer literature:
    - private industry
    - public sector



- labour market trends:
  - federal information
  - provincial information
  - local information
- career counselling:
  - tests, inventories, workbooks on self-assessment
  - occupational information
  - decision-making tools
  - action-planning tools
- computer-assisted guidance materials:
  - private industry products
  - government products
- job search information:
  - application forms
  - job interviews
  - resumes

4. What resources exist with which to establish this Resource Centre?

- physical facilities
- furnishings
- staff
- collection of materials
- budget for future acquisitions

## Securing Support/Funding

The answers to questions two and three, concerning the main users and their information needs, will give you definite ideas on where to start planning for future acquisitions. The answer to question one, regarding the rationale for establishing a Centre, will tell you if you need to lobby for further support from your organization or potential funding sources (federal, provincial, municipal governments; charitable organizations, etc.).

Whether attempting to secure independent funding or the support of your organization's decision makers (usually high level management), it is best to involve key people in the initial needs assessment discussions. Their active participation in this phase of the Centre's development can increase their understanding of the Centre's purpose in fulfilling an identified need within the community, as well as secure on-going support and commitment for future growth.

In either case, funding proposals based on clear statements of needs, supported by strong realistic arguments, are important, whether the support being sought is from within or outside your organization. The following proposal format covers most of the information needed by potential funding sources.





## **I. TITLE PAGE**

- A. Title**
- B. Submitted to**
- C. Submitted by**
- D. Funding Period**
- E. Funds Requested**

## **II. PROPOSAL ABSTRACT (briefly describe the purpose and primary client groups served by your facility)**

## **III. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Background of Organization**
- B. Statement of Problem (as defined in needs survey)**
- C. Program Objectives (or what services your facility intends to provide its users)**

## **IV. PLAN OF ACTION**

- A. Overview**
- B. Description of Procedures (that will be used to provide services)**
- C. Time Schedule**

## **V. STAFF**

## **VI. FACILITIES**

## **VII. EVALUATION (how you will determine if your program objectives are being met)**

## **VIII. BUDGET**

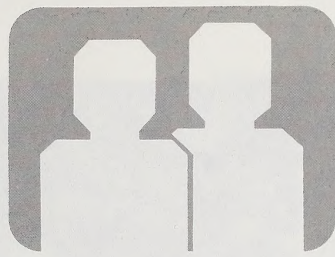
- A. Direct Costs**
- B. Indirect Costs**

Source: How to Develop a Career Resource Centre,  
Occupational Training Council, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1981.





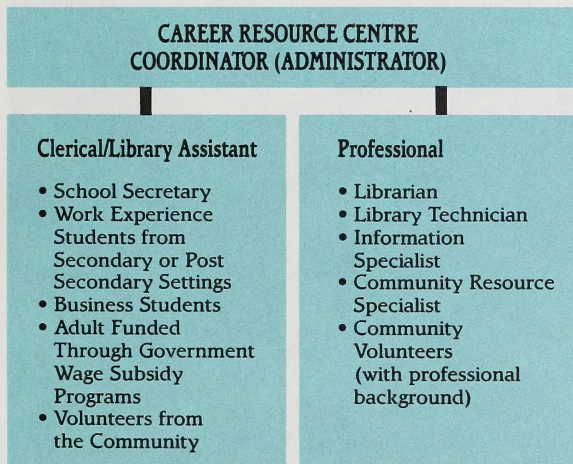




# STAFFING THE RESOURCE CENTRE

## Assessing Staffing Needs

Your needs survey will help you define clearly the kinds of services required by the Centre's primary users. From this information, you should be able to draw up a position description(s) of the person(s) needed to staff the facility. Past surveys that have examined the expectations and needs of people using Career Resource Centres have found the following staffing plan to work well for a Centre with limited resources and staff:



## Qualifications to Consider

The distribution of duties will be determined by the basic structure of the Career Resource Centre, its programming objectives, staff competencies, and resources available. With this in mind, the following are offered as guidelines for recruiting to the staffing plan outlined above.

The following are some of the competencies needed by individuals serving as Career Resource Coordinators:

- ability to manage Centre and supervise staff
- understanding of program evaluation
- knowledge of community/area employment trends and openings, and procedures for accessing and using this information
- ability to develop and administer budgets
- knowledge of career development literature
- understanding of career development theory and research
- ability to provide staff inservice
- knowledge of a variety of career guidance and counselling techniques
- ability to maintain information on occupational choice and job placement
- ability to plan and implement an array of career guidance activities (e.g., career fairs, field trips, student orientations, parent conferences, employer conferences)
- knowledge of program planning
- ability to communicate to potential clients the purpose and capabilities of the Career Resource Centre
- ability to manage resources (human and other)
- ability to maintain good public relations with the surrounding community

The following are some of the competencies needed by individuals serving in a professional capacity:

- knowledge of library systems and procedures
- knowledge of organization's billing and invoicing procedures
- ability to communicate effectively with clients, staff, and community members
- general knowledge of employment and further education opportunities in the area served by the agency
- ability to identify job placements, educational institutions, and career planning resources
- general knowledge of community, regional and provincial referral agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, mental retardation, private and public employment agencies







- ability to effectively communicate ideas in written form
- ability to provide instruction for using self-directed career exploration programs
- ability to maintain client and Centre records
- ability to administer surveys and analyze data
- understanding of the goals, organization, and communication channels within the agency
- understanding of the goals and objectives of the agency's career guidance and career education systems

The following are some of the competencies needed by individuals serving in a clerical capacity:

- ability to know when to seek supervisor's help
- ability to type
- general clerical skills
- ability to speak a client's native language or dialect if this need is appropriate
- general knowledge of audio-visual aids, materials, and equipment operation
- organizational and planning skills
- understanding of the agency's career guidance and career education programs
- ability to work with others

One qualification of key importance in this kind of work setting is, of course, "approachability"! A staff member may have all the necessary technical competencies listed above, but may not be utilized by clients if an attitude of indifference to client needs is apparent.

Once a position description has been written, finding the right staff person depends on the human resources available and on budget (i.e., can a full-time salary be offered? is a full-time person necessary? what salary level can be offered?)

If the Coordinator of the Career Resource Centre is not a library professional, having at least one fully-qualified library professional on staff is a good idea. When given the choice between professionals with either a library or career planning background, a strong library background is preferred. The smooth and effective running of a Career Resource Centre with a collection of over 1000 books depends on this expertise.



The specific position descriptions of any additional staff will depend on the services offered by the Centre. Typical extra staff functions include:

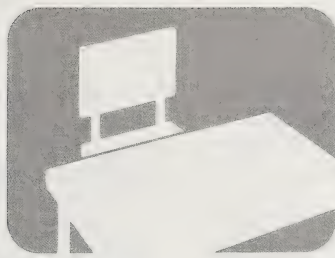
- information collection and dissemination to clients and career planning practitioners.
- assistance with the technical operation of computer terminals or audio-visual equipment.
- maintenance of the Centre.
- answering routine questions from clients that require non-expert information.

The use of volunteers from the organization or community, work experience students from educational settings, and workers from wage-subsidized government employment programs should be considered. These people can offer enthusiastic and competent assistance at little or no cost to the organization in return for gaining valuable work experience.









## PHYSICAL SET UP

The most important factors to consider when deciding on the physical arrangement of a Career Resource Centre are location, effective use of available space, and what kind of furnishings and equipment to purchase.

### Location

Whether the Centre is going to be used primarily by students in a high school, adults within a specific community, or career development professionals from across the province, potential users must be aware that the facility exists and where it is located. In addition, they must be able to find and use it with relative ease. An excellently stocked Resource Centre tucked away on the 13th floor of an obscure building will be far less utilized than a small “storefront” Resource Centre on the street level of a busy downtown location.

When housed in a school, locating the Centre adjacent to the counselling office provides the best incentive for students to use the resources. The counsellor can show each student where specific information is filed or displayed as the career counselling session ends. Another good, but second best choice, is in the school library. If this location is chosen, special care needs to be taken to make sure that the career resource materials are kept current and visible, and that the librarian is familiar with each resource.

If the Centre cannot be ideally or even fairly-well located for easy user accessibility, care must be given to directing potential users to its location. Signs and class orientations (in educational settings), notices on community billboards, ads or feature articles (in regular newsletters sent to career development practitioners or other professionals), or public service announcements on radio stations can help advertise its location.

### Physical Considerations

Once the location has been established, best use of the available space becomes the major issue. Your needs survey will have pointed out the kind of services required by your primary users (i.e., research or reading areas, discussion or seminar rooms), as well as the kinds of resource materials needed. If multi-media resources are to be stocked, a separate room that can be used for storage and/or viewing will be required.

When designing the actual floor plan of your Centre, these principles are good guidelines:

- locate the catalogue and circulation desk close together
- locate reading/research areas away from the circulation desk, but adjacent to the periodicals
- locate the head librarian away from high traffic areas and the library assistant close enough to reading/research areas to be easily accessed.

The effective use of available space also depends on: the shape of room(s), lighting, acoustics, and the selection of furniture and equipment.

Generally speaking, spaces that approach a square shape are more efficient in terms of lighting and acoustics, as well being easier to add to or subtract from for long-range planning purposes. Arranging furniture and equipment is also easier in square spaces.

Lighting that is well diffused and scattered evenly is best for spaces that will be used a great deal for reading. Too much light concentrated in any one direction causes shadowing, while light shining directly in the line of sight can be annoying.



Room size and wall and furnishings colours also affect lighting requirements. The smaller the room, the more light is needed; the lighter the room and furnishings, the less light is needed.

Interestingly, the availability of natural light can be as much a hindrance as benefit. The quality of daylight is not constant and anyone concentrating for long periods of time has difficulty reading under daylight conditions.

Because the reflection and absorption qualities of surfaces affect the quality of reading light, the following colours have been suggested by the American Illuminating Engineering Society for various surface finishes:

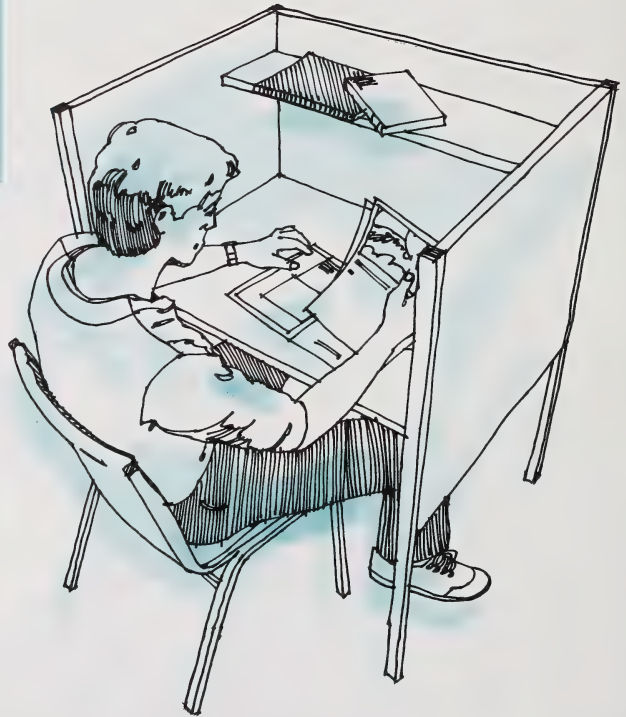
SURFACE	REFLECTANCE PROPERTY	COLOUR
ceiling finishes	80 - 90%	generally white
walls	40 - 60%	perhaps light buff
furniture	25 - 45%	perhaps light green
office machines & equipment	25 - 45%	perhaps light green
floors	20 - 40%	perhaps dark green

In any office environment, two factors contribute to the “acoustical privacy” of the individual worker: people’s conversational voices and the level of background noise. While little can be done about the loudness of a person’s voice (other than posting “Quiet Please” signs!), there are naturally sound absorbent materials available that can help control office sounds.

These materials (usually soft, dense, and honeycombed — for example, fiberglass wool) can be used to cover landscape partitions or ceiling-hung boards. Acoustical ceilings can absorb up to 85% of air borne sound.

Furniture can both help and hinder the control of sound. Doing a rough traffic flow study before placing furnishings and equipment is highly desirable. Simply facing people away from one another, staggering workstations, and keeping conversational distances within workstations short (between one and two meters) all help. On the other hand, long rows of metal files can reflect significant amounts of sound. Where file cabinets must be placed in long rows, panelling their backs with acoustic materials helps reduce sound reflection.

Typewriters and other sound-producing equipment can be placed on acoustic pads, as well as located away from reading areas. Floor carpeting helps quiet the sounds of walking traffic.





## Furnishings/Equipment

If sufficient funds are available, it is recommended that proper library furnishings (i.e. material storage units, shelves, filing cabinets, check-out desk, and card catalogue cabinet) be purchased as soon as possible. This equipment is designed specifically for organizing large volumes of resource materials effectively. When used as designed, they go a long way towards making the difference between chaos and order in a well-stocked Resource Centre.

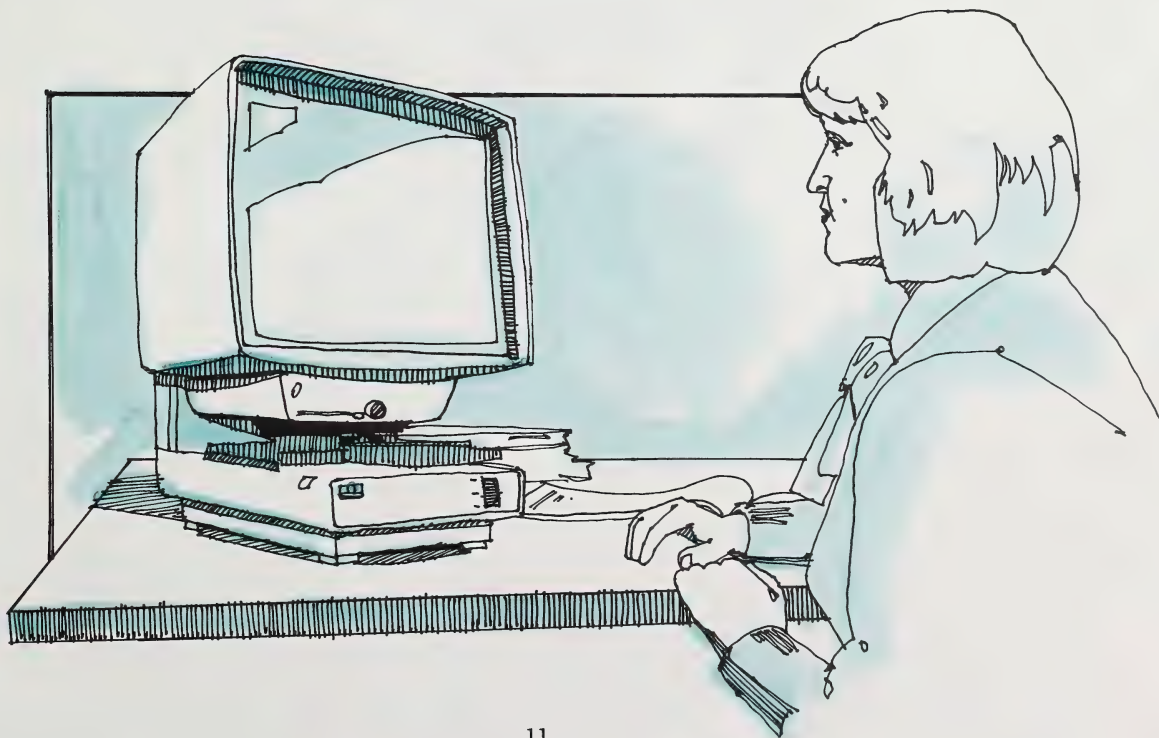
Purchasing library furnishings, while much like purchasing home furnishings in terms of looking for quality in structure and design, requires a few extra considerations:

- price (is it worth the special function it will provide?)
- ease of installation, maintenance, rearrangement, and demounting
- number of space saving arrangements available
- wire management (typewriter desks, microfiche readers, micro-computer terminals)
- acoustical qualities (how much noise does it produce?)

- lighting qualities (eg. microfiche reader, overhead projector)
- aesthetics
- safety (are there any sharp edges, exposed wires?)
- availability (time required to receive order and ship to site)
- manufacturer's commitment (warranties, guarantees, and service)

One of the most frequently purchased pieces of library equipment is a microfiche reader/printer. If you are only able to acquire the reader (small Resource Centres cannot always justify the purchase of a printer), it is a good idea to purchase a reader onto which you may later add a printer. Following are some factors to consider when acquiring a microfiche reader/printer:

- image, print quality
- index technique (grid indexing)
- ease of operation
  - a) automatic opening of film platen
  - b) focus
  - c) print contrast
  - d) positive print from positive or negative film
- dual magnification
- ease of maintenance
- shelf life and cost
- purchase cost











# ORGANIZING CAREER RESOURCE MATERIALS

Career resource materials are usually divided into a number of general broad categories:

## Occupational Information

- Monographs/profiles of occupations produced by career resource specialists
- Booklets and information sheets from industries, associations, and organizations

## Non-Occupational Information

- Education/Training (provincial, national, international)
- Apprenticeship programs
- Calendars — college, university, technical/vocational institutions
- Continuing education courses
- Correspondence/distance education
- Directories

## Financial Assistance

- Bursaries
- Scholarships
- Student Finance

## Employer Literature

- Private industry
- Public sector

## Labour Market Trends

- Federal sources
- Provincial sources
- Local sources

## Career Counselling

- Tests, inventories, workbooks for self-assessment
- Decision-making tools
- Action-planning tools

## Computer-Assisted Guidance Materials

- Private industry products
- Government products

## Job Search

- Application forms
- Job interviews
- Resumes

These broad categories may, in turn, be subdivided into whatever categories are most useful to the users of the Resource Centre. For example, a Resource Centre designed for high school students may have a large section that deals with post-secondary education, whereas a Resource Centre for adults may have a large section of literature from employers.

When devising a plan for physical organization, look at existing resource areas — in public libraries, local high schools, social service agencies, or Canada Employment Centres. They can be an important source of valuable ideas. But, before taking any of these ideas back to your own Centre, consider the client group served by the Resource Centre that you are visiting. How similar are their users to your own? Discussing the set-up with the person in charge of the Resource Centre usually reveals a wealth of extra information about how well that particular arrangement of materials works within that setting.

Before deciding on a specific filing system, it is important to consider who will be responsible for staffing your Career Resource Centre. This person's depth of knowledge about library filing systems and career information will determine how complex your system should be. It may be possible to tap into an existing system. The school librarian, for example, may already have developed an educational and occupational information section in the library that, with minor modifications, could meet your needs.



A good filing system should house a variety of written and printed documents, clippings, magazines, posters, pictures, films, tape recordings, pamphlets, books, and anything else that contains useful information. Ideally there should be only one designated location for each item being filed. Bringing related materials together in a logical order (occupations, employers, educational information, etc.) allows users to locate related information without the aid of a staff person.

In most settings, the simpler the system, the better. On the other hand, it must be detailed enough to pinpoint what the user is actually looking for. There are numerous ways to distinguish between subject categories: alphabetical, numerical, areas of interest, academic subject, agency-related, or geographic location. For the most part, the quantity and nature of the materials to be filed determines which of these systems is most appropriate. For example, non-occupational information lends itself best to alphabetical and numerical system combinations.

Small Resource Centres, with book collections of under 1000, might only need an alphabetical system that groups books into broad subject categories. This system allows users to quickly find a title or subject area on the shelf without having to figure out a complex numerical coding system. The major disadvantages with such a system are its tendency to become unwieldy as the Centre grows, and the fact that materials on related subjects may not be grouped together. For this reason, a combination of numerical and alphabetical systems, that may look like the following example, often works best in the long term:

Education and Training	— alphabetical and geographic arrangement
	— alphabetical and agency-related
Employer Literature	— alphabetical by industrial field or business name
Job Search	— alphabetical if small collection or numerical if large collection

All audio-visual materials (slides, filmstrips, video-tapes) should be classified according to their subject content and located either close to the staff person responsible for their use, or in a separate locked storeroom. Users can be made aware of their existence through the use of colourful posters, as well as through the card catalogue.

## Organizing Occupational Information

Occupational information refers to all materials that describe different occupations in terms of physical abilities and personality traits important to the job, training and experience required to enter the occupation, kinds of demands the occupation makes on an individual, salary patterns, etc.



## CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

There are numerous ways to organize occupational information: color codes, alphabetical designations, numerical designations, alphabetical/numerical combination designations, industry-related designations, areas of interest, or academic subject. Combining the best features of these systems usually works well — again, depending on the particular needs of the Centre's primary users. Any system chosen should satisfy the following criteria:

- there should be room for expansion
- it should be as easy as possible for users to find needed resource materials

Extensive occupational files that will be used by career planning practitioners may require a formal, numerical coding system that allows materials to be organized into groups or sub-groups and further subdivided to any degree desired. A good numbering scheme allows related occupations to be filed close together.

The system that Career Information Services (Alberta Manpower) uses to organize its occupational information is numerical and based on the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations (CCDO), originally developed by the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. The CCDO classification system is currently the most



widely-used in Canada and provides a nationwide link for many published occupational information materials. This system provides easy access to approximately 7000 individual occupational titles. It is organized in the following manner:

23 Major Groups identified by 2-digit numerical codes

e.g., 51 Sales Occupations

81 Minor Groups identified by 3-digit numerical codes

e.g., 517 Sales Occupations, Services

498 Unit Groups identified by 4-digit numerical codes

e.g., 5172 Real Estate Sales

Over 14,300 Individual Occupational Titles (of which approximately 7000 are described) identified by 7-digit numerical codes

e.g., 5172-110 Appraiser, Real Estate

Before you start slapping labels onto file folders, assess just how many and which kind of occupational categories are going to be useful to your Centre. Most career counselling agencies have found that the broader categories (i.e., Unit Groups) are sufficient for their client needs. Besides encouraging a broader level of exploration on the clients' part, it is highly unlikely that enough material can be found to justify files on many individual occupations.

The most useful specific codes will vary from agency to agency, depending on the size of the facility, and the type of client seen by the career counsellor(s). For example, a counsellor in a small prairie employment centre may not have much need for specific information on marine-based occupations.

Drawbacks to using this kind of system in a primarily self-service Career Resource Centre are:

- The system is complex and perhaps too comprehensive for certain user groups.
- The system is designed for use by professional staff and requires that such a person be available to clients.
- The system is, to a certain extent, dated and does not include newer occupations. This means that librarians must make "best guess" judgments about where to fit these occupations.

Another way to organize occupational information is by industry. This kind of system is particularly useful if users want to compare

similar occupations in different industries, or if there is a major local or regional industrial operation in which they are interested. In this case, a cross-reference system or index may be established to accommodate occupations that are found in more than one industry.

A filing system can also be tied to areas of interest with the interest areas used as major group headings. These major interest headings (eg. working with animals, working overseas, working in the travel industry) and appropriate sub-headings of occupations could be designated by the use of colored folder tabs. In this case an alphabetical listing of occupations would be helpful, as well as a cross-reference index for occupations that appear in more than one interest area.



Another useful filing system for school Resource Centres is one based on academic subjects, with occupations arranged according to the subject area to which they most closely relate. School subjects and occupations could each be filed in alphabetical order with a cross-reference index linking subjects to occupations. This same index could be used to access occupations from a number of school subject areas. This kind of a system may work best as a limited file kept by teachers in their classrooms, rather than for the entire occupational information file.

Other methods include filing by employer, geographic location, or local occupational opportunities. These may be useful to users interested in specific employers or locations, but limit the information accessed. An extensive cross-reference system would have to be devised so a user could locate information by occupation.



Once your occupational information has been gathered, your next decision is how to house it. The most common methods are:

- in binders with related occupations (perhaps minor groups) together on a shelf.
- in small drawers or mail-like slots along a wall.
- in filing cabinets (with either horizontal or vertical legal-sized drawers).

In a heavily used and minimally staffed Centre, binders or small clearly marked drawers allow for more independent use by clients.

## OBTAINING OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

A substantial amount of free or inexpensive printed occupational information (in the form of brochures and pamphlets) is produced and distributed by private industries, professional associations, and government departments. One of the easiest ways to start developing your occupational collection is to use any number of American or Canadian bibliographic indexes which compile all known sources of occupational materials.

To obtain these materials, simply write to the addresses provided in the indexes, specifying the title of the publication and number of copies required (often single copies only are available free). Depending on how well-equipped the organization is to handle requests, replies may take from one to several weeks.

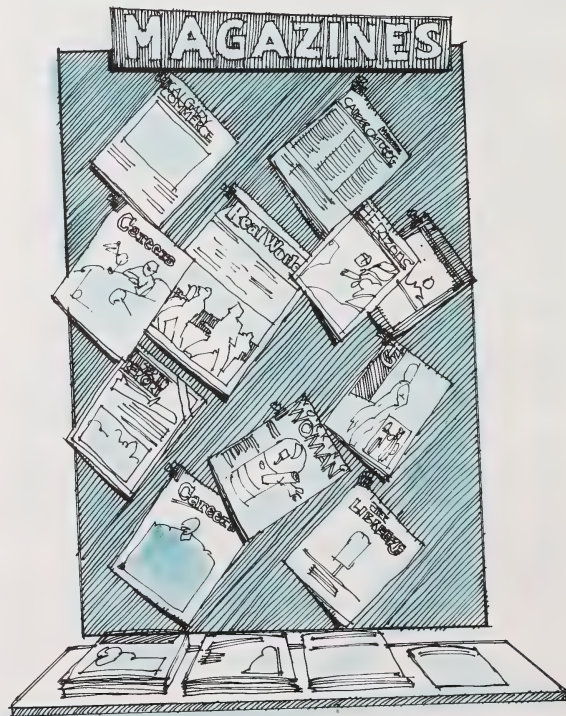
Another method is to create your own bibliographic index. This can be a time-consuming task initially but, in terms of maintaining your occupational information collection from year-to-year, the returns in the long run can be highly profitable.

Start by using the Yellow Pages or business and association directories to identify and contact likely producers of occupational resource materials. Many organizations are not in the publishing business but, from those who respond with occupational literature, you'll be able to develop a listing/inventory/index/card catalogue system of current addresses and names of publications. To be most useful, the index needs to be kept current — which translates into a staff person being responsible for regularly updating addresses and expanding the list of sources (see Keeping Occupational Information Up-To-Date).

To get you started, the following are some typical sources of occupational information:

- Career Information Services, Alberta Manpower
- CEIC Printing Centre, Ottawa
- Guidance Centre, University of Toronto
- Post-secondary Institutions
- Public Libraries — subject index files under specific occupational titles
- Trade and Business Associations (found in telephone books or business directories)
- Local Government Offices
- Individual Employers
- Union Halls
- Chambers of Commerce
- Newspapers
- Magazines such as:  
*Careers & the Job Market*  
*Career World*  
*Chatelaine*  
*Futurist*  
*Savvy*  
*Teen Generation*  
*The Canadian Campus Magazine*  
*Worklife*

See *Resources* at the end of this guide for addresses.





## EVALUATING OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

It's important to be aware that some of these sources have public relations/marketing goals in mind when they produce occupational information and therefore may not describe occupations objectively. The following questions may help you decide which materials should be kept for your occupational files:

- Is it Canadian? (American information is acceptable for general descriptions if Canadian information is not available.)
- Does it spell out the physical abilities and personality traits which are important to the occupation?
- Does it describe in detail the training and experience required?
- Is it explicit in presenting the kinds of demands the occupation makes on the individual?
- Is it dated? Information that is more than five years old, unless extremely general in nature, is probably no longer useful.
- Does it give a true picture of salary patterns, not just the upper ranges?
- Does it depict what entry-level jobs are like, rather than concentrating on the glamour positions at the top?
- Does it present an honest assessment of future employment and advancement possibilities?
- Does it consider the real prospects of women and minority groups?
- Does it retain an objective viewpoint, allowing the reader to make an independent judgement about the occupation's desirability? Or has it been written for promotional or entertainment purposes?
- Is it readable? Readers usually prefer quick, precise facts presented in a simple, straightforward manner, as opposed to a rambling narrative.

If you are unsure of the answers to any of the above questions, check with other career development professionals who may have already assessed the materials in question. Other validation sources include: people employed in the occupation in question, school guidance counsellors, personnel professionals, and employers.

The key guideline in evaluating any piece of career information is determining its overall usefulness to your clients. This, in turn, depends on their information needs. Generally, the more focused their career goals, the more specific the needs. For example, a client who has already decided to pursue a career in cosmetology needs specific information on qualifications required, starting salary, future employment, and advancement possibilities. Another person leaving high school with no clear career goals may need more general information on abilities and personality traits important in different occupational fields.



## KEEPING OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE

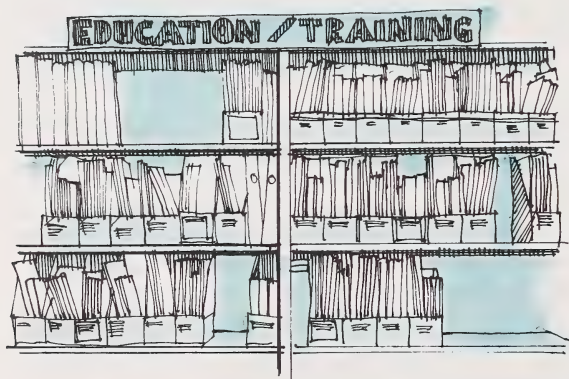
Occupational information is useful only if it is current. Due to rapidly changing employment trends and working conditions in various occupations, keeping your occupational files relevant is a task that could almost become a daily routine. It might involve the following:

- Every time you see a relevant newspaper, book or magazine article, clip it out, indicate source and date, code it, and place it in the appropriate file. If the book or magazine needs to remain intact, put a photocopy of the information into the file.
- Every time a free occupational brochure is advertised in a professional journal, order and evaluate it before filing.
- Before purchasing occupational information advertised in professional journals, consider the costs involved and the usefulness of the information being advertised (is it worth the price? are similar materials available for free? how long will the material remain useful?).



Sometimes hard to obtain information can only be purchased however, so you will have to decide how much of your budget is available to develop your occupational collection.

- If someone has been assigned the responsibility for maintaining files, have that person produce an inventory of each file's contents that includes the name of the pamphlet, producer's name and address, and date of publication. If any materials are lost, replacing them should be straightforward.
- Every time you add a new piece of information to a file, check the publication dates of the existing materials. When receiving a new edition of existing materials, throw out the old edition.
- Every time you remove a file for client use, check the contents for outdated materials. Information on salary levels and education requirements often change from year to year.
- Update your files annually by ordering from a current edition bibliographic index.
- Whenever you have the chance, check the key contents of your materials (i.e., future outlook, salary, qualifications) with professionals currently working in the appropriate occupations.



## Organizing Non-Occupational Information

Non-occupational information refers to print or audio-visual materials that deal with such topics as: education and training programs, student financial aid, labour market trends, and the how to's of job hunting. Bound editions can be arranged on shelves while articles, newspaper clippings, and brochures can be located in filing cabinets.

For this collection to be useful, users must be able to locate specific publications without the direct aid of a librarian. In order for this to happen, two basic things are required: a good classification system and a good catalogue system.

## CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The first step involved in organizing publications is to decide on the classification system that works best for your particular Resource Centre collection and clientele. (See Organizing Occupational Information for a discussion of this point.) Career information can be classified in many ways and you may use different systems for filing the many kinds of material you have in your collection. As in organizing occupational information, there are pros and cons to each system.

Regardless of the kinds of materials being organized, there are four basic tests for a good classification system:

1. It should provide as distinct a notation as possible for the publication — ideally no two books will have the same notation.
2. The notation should be easy to remember — i.e., a number like 82.5 is easier to work with than 45.54.
3. The system should create logical subject groupings on the shelves so that a user can browse through the collection without reference to a catalogue.
4. Expansion should be possible within the system.

Small Centres that do not intend to expand in the future do not need a complicated number classification system. They are probably adequately served by a simple color code system whereby all publications in a specific subject area have the same colored dots on their spines.

For example:

- red — all publications on resume writing
- green — all publications on job interviewing
- blue — all publications on application forms
- orange — all publications on student financial assistance
- yellow — all university calendars, etc.

Or all publications in a certain subject area fall within a specific range of numbers.

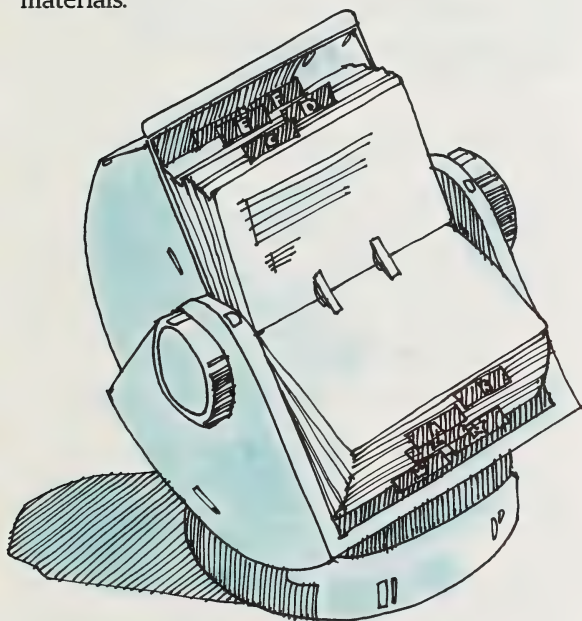
For example:

- 10.0 - 10.9 — all publications on resume writing
- 20.0 - 20.9 — all publications on job interviewing, etc.



The main concerns here should be whether or not the resource materials are organized in a logical fashion, and whether or not the users can easily find their way to the various categories.

Non-bound materials are probably best organized within a subject filing system located in filing cabinets or boxes on shelves. Again, your selection of subject headings depends on the users' information needs. It's important to use commonly understood and accepted subject headings so users will not have to guess at the files' contents. A cross-referencing system is very useful to ensure that all relevant subject areas are explored in the search for specific materials.



## CATALOGUE SYSTEMS

Of the two basic requirements for organizing non-occupational information, the catalogue is the most important. Any classification system can work if it is linked to a good catalogue.

A catalogue helps the user locate information. It can take any number or combination of physical forms, depending on the size of the collection and type of user:

- rolodex card file (e.g., small high school Resource Centre)
- card index in file drawers (e.g., most public libraries)
- boxes with subject headings displayed on a shelf (e.g., very small Resource Centre)
- listing of subject heading taped to the outside of the respective file cabinet drawers (e.g., medium-to-large Resource Centre)

Regardless of which system is used, it needs to be clearly marked so clients can easily identify it. Identification signs over stacks or colorful posters explaining the system help.

The basis of any catalogue system is its subject index — the list of topic headings that describe the collection and allow the user to locate publications within narrow subject categories. If your Resource Centre can produce a good subject/author/title catalogue, your users should have no problems locating publications, even if they don't know exact titles or authors.

Subject headings should be fairly specific to the user's needs in any one Resource Centre. Subject headings that no one uses or understands are pointless.

## OBTAINING NON-OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

There are numerous sources of information on career-related subject areas including:

- Career Information Services, Alberta Manpower
- CEIC Printing Centre, Ottawa
- Guidance Centre, University of Toronto
- Post-secondary Institutions
- Public Libraries — subject index files under specific subject titles
- Trade and Business Associations (listed in telephone books or business directories)
- Local Government Offices
- Individual Employers
- Union Halls
- Chambers of Commerce
- Magazines such as:
  - Careers & the Job Market*
  - Career World*
  - Chatelaine*
  - Futurist*
  - Savvy*
  - Teen Generation*
  - The Canadian Campus Magazine*
  - Worklife*
- Periodicals such as:
  - Canadian Vocational Journal*
  - Career Development Newsletter*
  - Personnel and Guidance Journal*
  - School Guidance Worker*
  - The Career Development Bulletin*
  - Vocational Guidance Quarterly*
- Newspapers
- Book Publishers Lists



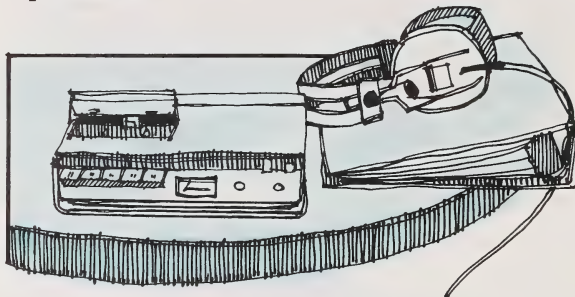
Subscribing to a selection of relevant periodicals and being placed on organizations' mailing lists are excellent ways to keep current information on job search techniques, market trends, educational opportunities, and other employment-related issues coming into your Career Resource Centre. Some organizations listed here (such as libraries, union halls, and Chambers of Commerce) may not produce their own career materials; they are, however, important contacts to develop to keep your knowledge base current. See *Resources* at the end of this booklet for addresses of major producers of career information.

## EVALUATING NON-OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Some questions you should ask yourself before acquiring any bound publications for your Resource Centre include:

- Has a review of this book been written? These may be found in newsletters published for career development professionals (such as *The Career Development Bulletin*, or *Career Planning and Adult Development Newsletter*).
- Does the content appear to deal with my users' needs?

- Is the text easily understandable (not full of six-syllable words or jargon, and coherently organized)?
- Do other Career Resource Centres or career planning professionals have this publication? Do they consider the author qualified to write about the topic in question?
- Does the cost reflect the value of the publication?

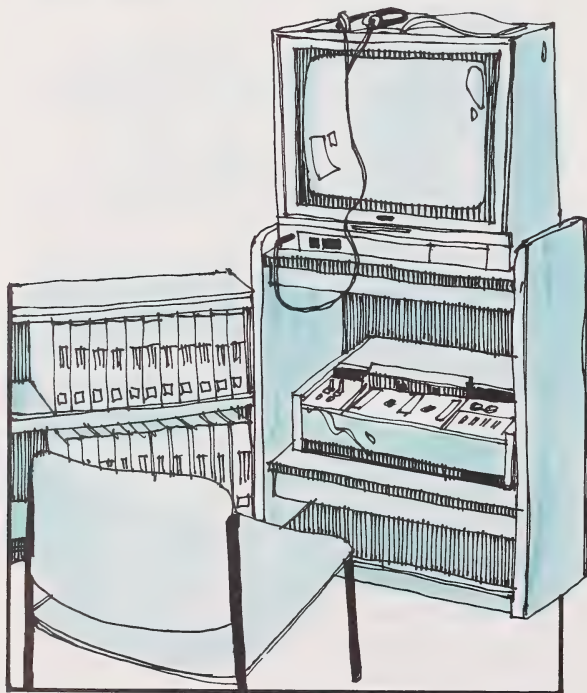


## Organizing Non-Print Materials

Non-print materials (films, slide-tapes, video cassettes, etc.) are becoming an increasingly important part of many Resource Centres. They are not only visually stimulating and impactful, but they enable valuable information to be transmitted effectively, particularly to non-reading-oriented clients.

There are two main ways to organize non-print materials: either classify and catalogue them in the same manner as the print collection, or use a different classification/cataloguing system that separates these materials from the main collection.

The high costs of non-print resource materials suggest that they should be stored in a separate, secure (lockable) cabinet or room.





## OBTAINING NON-PRINT MATERIALS

Films, video cassettes and other non-print materials are more difficult to purchase than print materials primarily because they usually require pre-viewing before a purchase decision can be made.

Previewing can turn out to be a costly and time-consuming procedure. This is where your network of professional contacts can be invaluable — either as a source of free previews (if another agency already has the resource in question) or reduced costs (if several agencies want to preview together and share the costs). Screening materials with your colleagues has the added benefit of a more thorough evaluation.

The larger audio-visual marketing companies regularly set up preview days across the country for which they charge a nominal fee to draw in potential buyers to see their latest products. Make sure that you are on their mailing lists for such events.

Certain companies (such as the National Film Board) have previewing facilities in major cities that can be booked free-of-charge by potential buyers or educational institutions wishing to rent their products. See *Resources* at the end of this guide for the addresses of four major Canadian marketing companies.

## EVALUATING NON-PRINT MATERIALS

Because non-print materials usually require a larger investment of money, clear guidelines for evaluating them are crucial. The guidelines offered here emphasize content, instructional design, bias, and quality of information, as opposed to entertainment or aesthetic values. While the effectiveness of any audio-visual material can be increased by its ability to entertain the audience, such artistic considerations should be viewed as “extras.”

### Content and Instructional Design:

- Early expression of purpose — is the purpose of the product obvious to the viewer within the first five minutes of the presentation? Instructional designs that use a different approach should clearly explain why in the user's guide.
- Title — does it accurately reflect the content or purpose of the film?

- Objectives/content/audience coherence — is the product message organized logically to effectively and obviously fulfill the stated objectives, which should be clearly outlined in the user's guide? A product that addresses a limited number of objectives adequately is usually more desirable than one that overwhelms the audience with content and multi-objectives.
- Accurate and adequate presentation of concepts and information — are concepts presented in a manner appropriate to the comprehension level of the intended audience? Are terms relating to the concepts defined in the user's guide? Is all information accurate, comprehensive, and current? Most products require revision of both audio and visual components every five years in order to update information presented.
- Social orientation — is the product free of sex, age, racial, or religious stereotyping? Are individuals of all ages, racial and religious backgrounds, and both sexes equitably portrayed at all employment levels?
- Information reflects reality — does the product retain enough objectivity to ensure credibility and accuracy of information?
- Motivating effect on audience — does the product encourage movement from passive viewing to active discussion or follow-up activities that may produce changes in the viewer's own life situation?

### Technical Considerations:

- Lead on the film — the lead should be long enough to meet threading requirements of all machines without bypassing important credit or focusing frames. Sound filmstrips should be clearly marked for set-up that ensures good sound/sight synchronization.
- Credits — the following information should appear in the credits to help the user and audience identify the viewpoint and assess reliability of information presented:
  - date of production/revision
  - name of producer/distributor, sponsors, contributors, and sources of funds
  - name, position title, and credentials of consultants
- Picture quality — must be acceptable in terms of focus, clarity, color accuracy, contrast, and color balance.
- Sound quality — must be acceptable in terms of clarity, volume, pace, and narrative music mix.



- Length — time limit should accommodate the attention and interest span of the intended audience (eg. no longer than 20 minutes for an average adult audience).
- Packaging — should protect the materials against damage and facilitate easy identification and use.

The existence of a user's guide is an important component of any non-print material. A guide can help users select the product and also be a source of information on how to use it appropriately. It should identify what the product proposes to do, how it proposes to do it, and to which audience(s) it is directed. Instructions on how to most effectively utilize the product are also desirable.

Ideally, user's guides should include the following features:

- Credits which should include:
  - date of production/revision
  - name and address of producer/distributor, sponsors, contributors, and sources of funds
  - name, title, and credentials of consultants
- Purpose, objectives, and audience(s) — the general purpose and specific behavioural objectives of the product and targeted audience(s) should be stated. Terms referring to concepts discussed should be defined.
- Synopsis — should give an accurate description of the content and teaching strategy used to accomplish the stated purpose. It should include:
  - running time
  - full or partial scripts
  - frame descriptions
  - suggested stop and discussion points
- Results of field testing — information regarding the response of audiences to trial or preliminary field testing procedures.
- Discussion, activities, and resources — specific suggestions should be provided to assist moving the audience from passive viewing to active involvement relevant to the stated purposes of the product and developmental level of the intended audience(s). A bibliography of related sources of information, list of resources available to further the purposes of the film, or other references should also be provided.

## Computer-Assisted Guidance Materials

Career guidance has entered the age of computers with a rapidly growing proliferation of computer-assisted tools. Computers are now being used to: teach clients about the career planning process, help them pick post-secondary institutions and programs of study, write their resumes, search for job openings, and be scheduled into job interviews.

By far the most exciting of these tools, and coincidentally most difficult to evaluate, are the "computer-assisted guidance systems" currently being marketed to Career Resource Centres. Following is a list of considerations for selecting such a system:



### Scope

- How many components of the guidance process does it cover? Does it appraise clients? Offer information about options? Apply strategies for decision-making? Give help in planning?
- What population of clients is it intended for?
- What setting(s) is it intended for?

### Content

- How well does the system cover each component of the guidance process? What does it appraise? How? What topics of information does it offer? What methods of decision-making does it apply? What topics of planning information does it offer?



### *Structure*

- Does it offer direct access to information? Does it offer structured search for occupations and/or planning options? Does it provide cross-references between related topics of information, or to other resources? Do the different components of the guidance process incorporated within the system use consistent guidance concepts?

### *Style*

- How interactive is it? How clear is it? Are the client's choices clear? Can the client follow the guidance process?
- Is the hardware easy to use? Are the scripts easy to read?

### *Procedures*

- How is the information selected and prepared? Are the occupations and information topics suited to the user population? Are the sources of information reliable? Is the information up-to-date? Is the information interpreted validly? Is there a manual or other description of procedures?

### *Costs*

- How expensive is the system? What are the separate costs of hardware, licenses, and operation?

### *Effects*

- What are the effects of the system on the client's behaviours, knowledge, attitudes, and opinions?
- How do counsellors make use of it? Does it change the guidance process at the user site?

### *Rationale for Guidance and Model of Career*

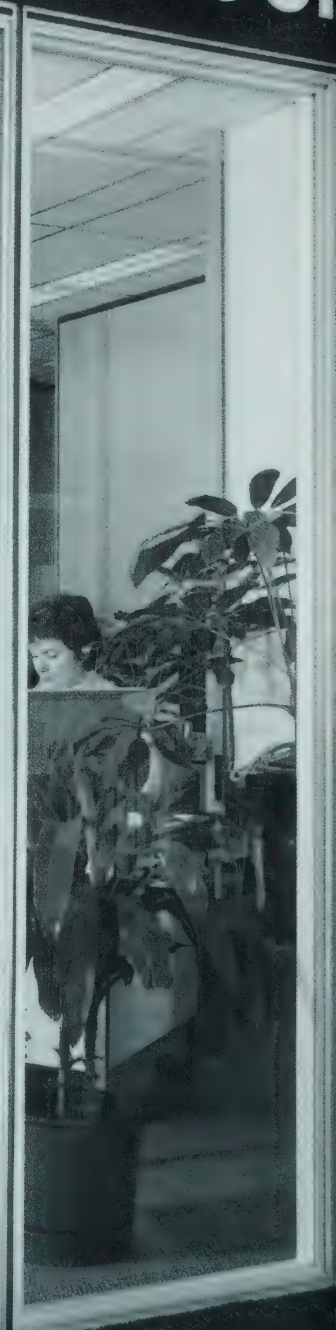
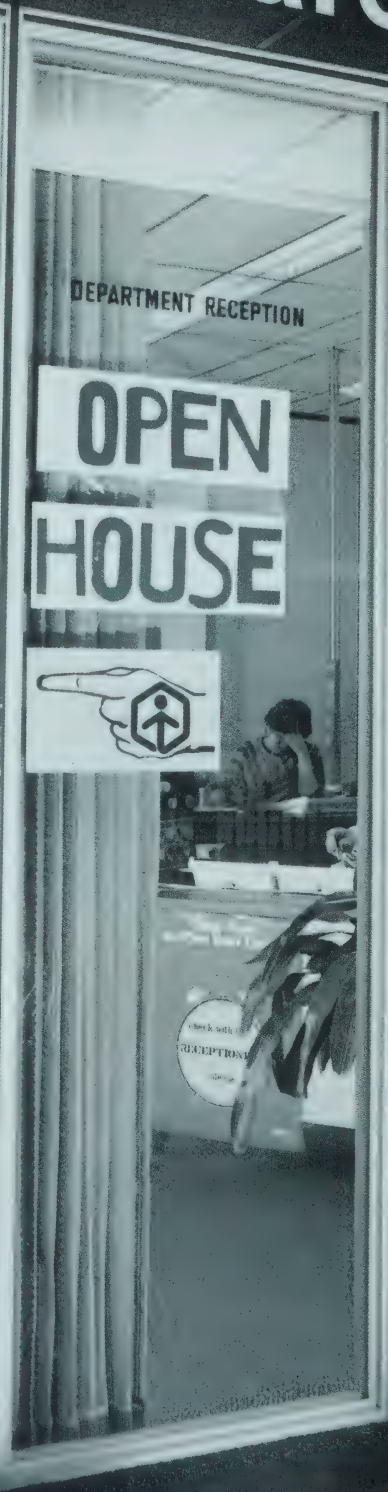
#### *Decision-Making*

- What rationale and model is the system based on? What is the theory of guidance underlying the system, if any?

While a computer-assisted system may not live up to its claim as a "guidance" tool, it may be very useful as an occupational information source. The same guidelines for evaluating occupational information apply here. It is also important to consider carefully if this is a tool that has the potential to be misused if it is installed in a corner of the Resource Centre and left unattended. In other words, is it truly a stand-alone program or does its successful use require the presence of a fully-trained guidance counsellor? If the latter is true, this system should not be placed in a self-directed Resource Centre.



# Alberta Career Centre







# PROMOTING YOUR CAREER RESOURCE CENTRE

The most comprehensive and up-to-date career resource collection is of little value if its potential users cannot be made aware of it quickly and easily. This involves encouraging potential users to come to the Centre, and then making sure they can easily locate the specific resource materials which meet their needs and interests.

## Letting the User Know You Exist

A variety of methods can be used to bring potential users into the Resource Centre. Depending on who they are, the use of local media (to attract community groups) or orientation techniques (to attract in-house groups) may be most appropriate. Community users could be volunteer organizations, professional groups, or even book discussion groups interested in having a space to meet on a regular basis. In-house groups will be users who belong to your organization.

### Community Group Attraction Strategies:

- Issue local media releases to announce your opening.
- Hold an Open House (announced in a media release). An informal atmosphere with simple refreshments and take-away information brochures can heighten community interest and use.
- Invite speakers from the community into the Centre to talk about current topics of local interest.
- Develop flyers, handouts, or promotional materials such as bookmarks or book covers with the name/logo of the Centre stamped on them for distribution within the community through such agencies as schools, libraries, etc.
- Place posters on billboards and in shopping malls throughout the community.
- Make the Centre available to community organizations. This promotes goodwill and positive “word-of-mouth” advertising, the best promotional strategy available! Ask community users for suggestions for improvements in the Centre’s operation by way of a suggestion box.
- Volunteer to conduct community presentations — in classrooms, libraries, girl guides/boy scout meetings, conferences, etc.
- Be available to meet with civic and community groups.

### In-house Group Attraction Strategies:

- Conduct orientation programs on a regular basis and invite every potential work unit to learn how the purpose, programs, and materials of the Centre can meet their unique needs.
- Prepare an in-house newsletter that describes the resources, programs, activities, and services available (also can be used for certain community groups). Include a map that helps users find the various resources.
- Make use of existing in-house newsletters or staff memos — short, concise statements are usually appreciated.
- Place posters throughout the organization publicizing the Centre and its services.
- Develop an audio-visual presentation showing the Centre in action with clients using the resource materials. A brief history of the Centre’s development could add an instructional element while a description of its materials and activities is important (also useful for certain community groups).
- Develop a logo and use it on all materials. This establishes a sense of Centre identity and pride of ownership by all in-house staff.
- Provide free materials to staff whenever possible.



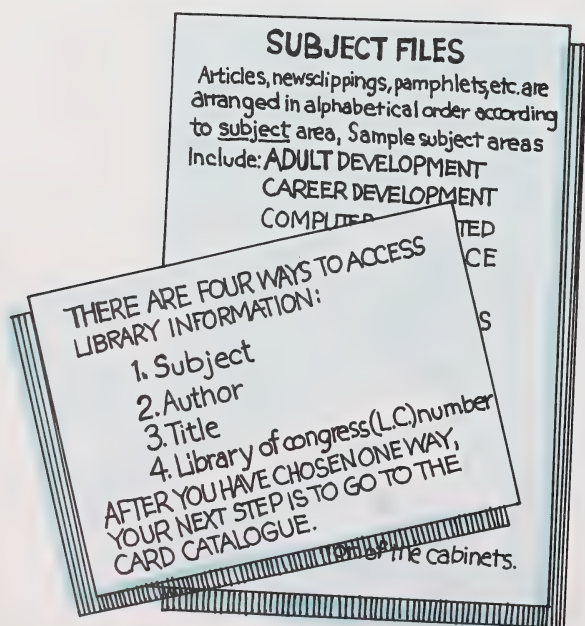
- Maintain a visitors' book to provide information for evaluation and a means of recognizing visitors (both in-house and community).
- Involve users in the operation of the Centre — eg. assisting in setting up displays, bulletin boards and filing materials. A suggestion box encourages staff input to operations. Always recognize the contributor when a suggestion is adopted.

## Encouraging User Self-Directedness

Regardless of the thoroughness of the orientation provided, most Resource Centre users will need some help in their information search. The goal of any Resource Centre should be to assist the user to be as independent or self-directed in this search as possible. To do this, a number of user aids (in addition to the reference librarian and card catalogue) can be developed.

The most common aid is the simple instructional sign that tells users where certain information is located or how to use a specific type of filing system (see diagrams). When designing such signs it is important to:

- use eye catching colors and large simple printing.
- make it large enough to be seen from a distance.
- use as few words as possible — be brief and to the point.
- guide the user through the process from beginning to end.



It's always a good idea to test your wording on a typical user before finalizing the signs, especially if they are to be printed commercially. It's not easy to master the art of clear, concise instructions.

If many of your Resource Centre clientele are going to be first-time library users or people unfamiliar with typical library classification systems, you may want to consider using subject headings on the library shelving for the non-occupational collection of bound materials in addition to your classification designations. As well, subject files should have clearly visible headings on the boxes or filing drawers in which they are contained.

Occupational information to be used by clients and the public needs to be easily identifiable by occupational field or industry (whichever you have selected) and can be effectively displayed in three-ring binders on a row of shelves. Occupational information to be used solely by career practitioners (i.e. extensive CCDO files) is probably best housed in filing cabinets.

Other useful user aids are pathfinders, or printed guides that define a pathway through the Centre's resources on a particular topic. For example, a pathfinder for resume writing identifies various portions of the library that have information relevant to the writing of resumes. The pathfinder may also include a selected bibliography of particularly useful resources. An additional section could describe other resources available outside the Resource Centre and, in this way, add a referral function.

This aid should be brief and to the point — ideally no longer than one page, both sides. While one side could describe the Centre's resources, the other could provide necessary referral information for major local employment and training resources. It could also be color-coded to fit into a color-coded classification system. See "Careers — Guide to Career Resource Library" for one modified sample of an orientation pathfinder developed by the University of Toronto Career Counselling and Placement Centre.



# Careers?!\$

Adapted from the University of Toronto Career Counselling and Placement Centre

## GUIDE TO CAREER RESOURCE LIBRARY

This library is designed on the self-help system with a staff member available should assistance be needed. Each resource is catalogued by subject area and colour-coded to reflect its use.

There are four major colour-coded sections to the library which are as follows:

**CAREERS (RED).** This section contains descriptive information on a wide range of occupational areas.

**EMPLOYMENT (GREEN).** This section contains resources useful primarily for active job searching: business directories; employers of graduates by discipline including detailed information on those companies which recruit on campus; labour market and salary surveys; federal, provincial and municipal government and crown corporation information.

**EDUCATION (YELLOW).** This section contains educational directories and calendars for community colleges, university undergraduate, graduate and professional programmes in Canada and the United States, as well as information on part-time, correspondence programmes, short courses and professional development seminars.

**WORK/STUDY/TRAVEL ABROAD (BLUE).** This section includes resources on all aspects of living abroad. The educational component contains directories and calendars of full-time graduate and undergraduate programmes as well as short-term courses and exchange programmes. The work and travel areas focus primarily on working holidays, exchange programmes, volunteer work or work camp situations. Information is also available on non-profit organizations such as CUSO, WUSC and UNESCO, as well as profit-oriented organizations with work/study programmes.

### SPECIAL SECTIONS

These resources, developed by the Career Counselling and Placement Centre to provide additional assistance with your career development process, can be accessed by the card catalogue, but are shelved separately from the main collection. Special instructions regarding location will appear on the catalogue card.

**CAREERTALK TAPES.** A collection of audio tapes from our annual Careertalks Series with representatives from education, business and industry.

**SAMPLE JOB BINDERS.** Positions advertised in newspapers, journals, government publications and listings from our permanent job registry are housed in a series of binders and indexed according to the academic discipline sought or most applicable and the work environment represented.

**EMPLOYMENT SURVEYS.** Statistical and occupational information on U of T graduates by academic discipline.

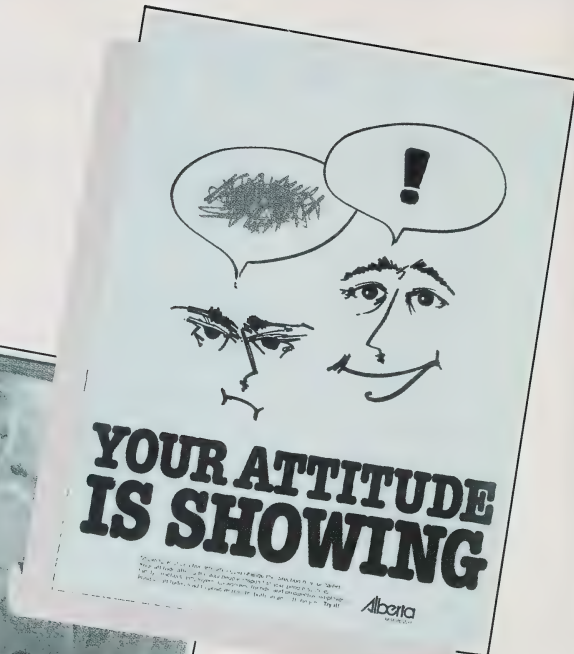
**SUMMER RESOURCES.** A collection of resources to aid with an active summer job search. Included are listings of employers of students in previous summers and the academic disciplines sought.

**JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS.** Subscriptions to daily newspapers, business journals and periodicals are available to keep you in touch with your field, as well as provide insights into the economic climate and job market.

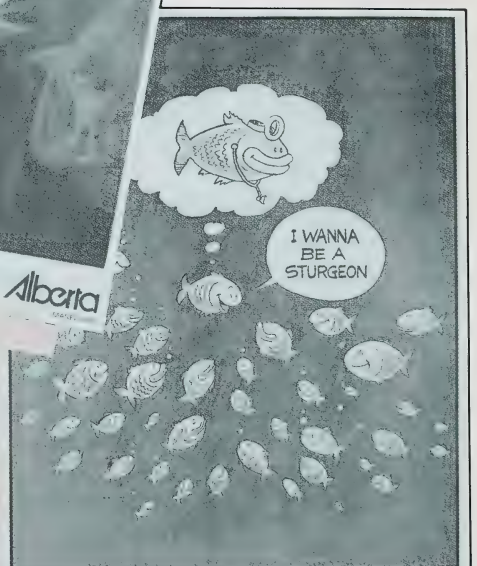
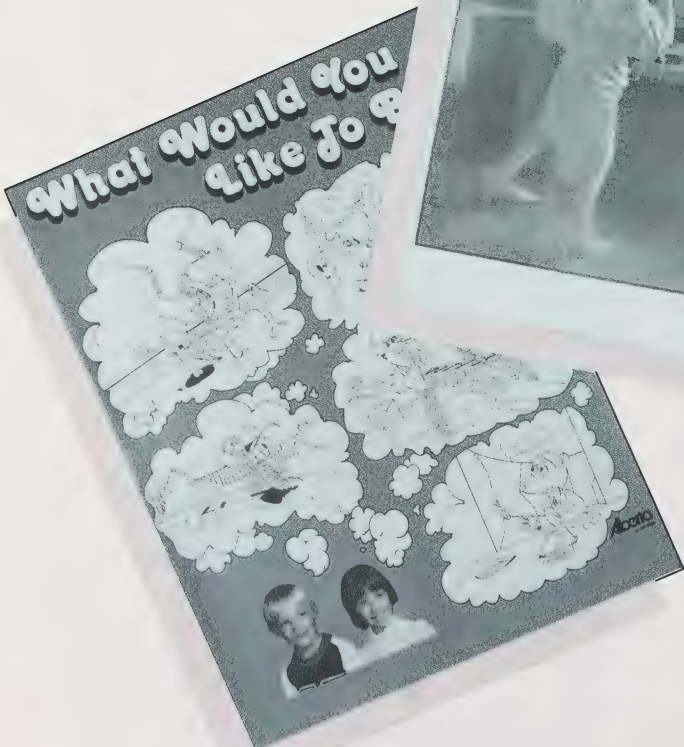
**CAREER PLANNING AND JOB SEARCH RESOURCES.** Resources that aid in both a theoretical and practical way with the career development and job search process.

**VOLUNTEER BOARD.** If you wish to augment your work experience, or as an alternative to remunerative work, volunteer jobs are collected from a variety of sources and posted on a bulletin board in the library.





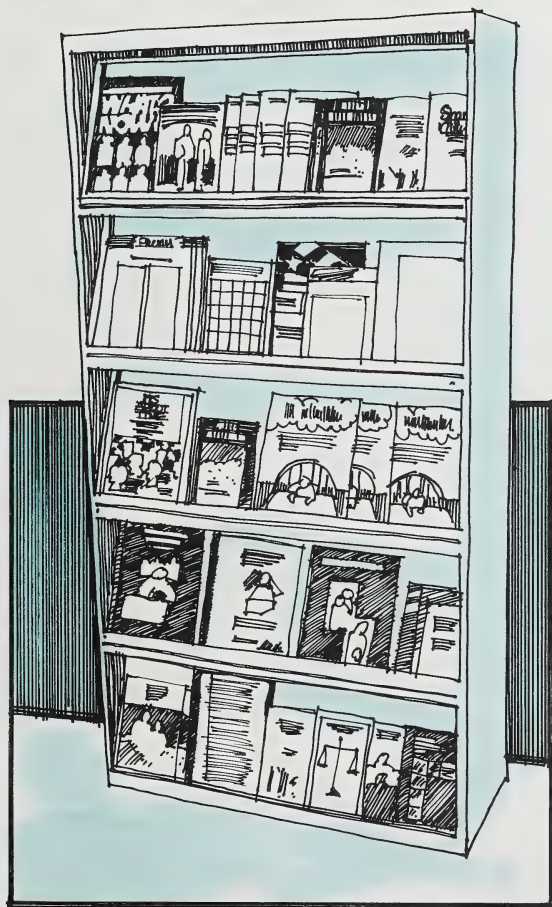
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## Use of Special Display Furnishings

While special display furnishings may initially appear to be an extravagant “luxury” item, these items can provide a tremendous payoff in terms of enhanced user independence and better utilization of resources. Consider for a moment the difference in visual impact between periodicals on regular shelves with successive issues piled on top of one another and these same periodicals’ current issues standing on vertical shelving with full cover visible to the eye. The old adage, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” becomes the key when setting up your resource area.



## Bulletin Board Displays, Collages, Posters

Visual aids are very important in helping your Resource Centre appear friendly and operate smoothly. Probably the most well-used and important of these are bulletin board displays, collages, and posters.

Displays can be designed to be informational, motivational, or a combination of the two. There are three important guidelines to remember:

- Locate at eye level — this means for the height of the typical user. Resource information designed for children should be at their eye level as well.
- Locate as close as possible to a major traffic route — i.e. in the entrance of the Centre or around the reading area, not on walls adjacent to shelves.
- Be as clearly “purposeful” as possible — a smorgasbord approach is less likely to have impact on the viewer than a thematic approach that deals with a specific topic area.

Examples of display themes might include:

- “Career-a-Week” — featuring a different occupational field or specific job every week that includes information on key job responsibilities and tasks, entry-level qualifications, career paths, salary, working conditions, as well as contacts for further information (eg. post-secondary institutions offering training for this occupation, agencies that employ this kind of worker and, with their permission, names of local people who work in this occupation).
- Job Market Trends — featuring current statistical tables and expert opinions on occupations that will/will not be growing in the next five/ten years.
- Career Planning Process — featuring the steps involved in the career planning process with pictures that show people involved in this process at every step.
- The Job Interview — featuring a description of the stages of a typical interview with typical questions asked and reasons behind the questions at each stage.
- Community Career Planning/Education Projects — featuring a different group's project every week/month.

Ideas for displays should relate as closely as possible to the needs of your user groups. In fact, soliciting their help in both planning and constructing the display is an important community relations strategy that will increase commitment and subsequent use of the Resource Centre.









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# FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS – COMPUTERIZING YOUR RESOURCE CENTRE

As information retrievers and disseminators, librarians today have the opportunity to free themselves from the routine and tedious chores that consume much of their time and energy. Because these are exactly the kinds of tasks computers do well, the natural step for many librarians is to consider the use of computers in their day-to-day operations.

This chapter's goal is to introduce you to the potential benefits of micro-computers within a Resource Centre and help you decide whether or not your Centre is a good candidate for micro-computerization. It will assume some knowledge of micro-computer technology, both hardware and software. The focus here is on micro-computerization because most small Resource Centres cannot afford to consider a more comprehensive and powerful computer system such as a mainframe or mini-computer. In addition to being initially more affordable, the site requirements and on-going maintenance of a micro-computer are usually more manageable. Following are some questions that may help in deciding whether or not your Resource Centre should purchase a micro-computer:

- Are there backlogs anywhere that hinder the delivery of service?
- Do you have trouble quickly locating materials not on the shelf or overdue?
- Is there repetitive work that consumes time better spent in other activities?
- Are there areas in which a large volume of information is processed or required?

If your answer to one or more of these questions is "yes", you can probably justify the acquisition of a micro-computer.

If you are not yet ready to consider computerizing your Resource Centre, this chapter will provide you with a good idea of how other small libraries are currently moving into the "computer age." For further sources of information on this topic see the References Section at the end of this chapter.

Keeping in mind that your main objective is always to provide the most-needed services using available staff, time and materials, the first step towards computerization is to analyze the needs of your particular Resource Centre users. If done with care, this will go a long way towards selecting the right hardware and software and smoothly incorporating the computer into your present system.

Throughout your needs analysis, it is a good idea to consult with people who already have some experience with library computerization and with your own in-house and community users. Besides offering suggestions and possibly getting involved in fund-raising activities, this inclusion will increase users' acceptance of the new system when it is in place.

## Assessing Your Needs

The first step is to conduct a formal or informal survey of the potential users of the computer, staff as well as current Centre users. If Centre users are going to be allowed to operate the computer, you will need to know:

- who is most interested in using the computer
- for what purpose(s) and how often
- their existing degree of familiarity with computers



Next, space needs have to be considered. Space availability may turn out to be an important factor in your decisions as to who will use the system and for what purpose(s), as well as which hardware to select.

The third and most important step is to analyze your current methods of handling major tasks to determine which Resource Centre functions are good candidates for computerization. This step also involves identifying which tasks are satisfactorily performed through manual methods, and which could be improved with minor modifications without using a computer.

A good way to begin this analysis is to keep a log of daily activities that includes a statement about completion timelines (i.e. did this task get completed by the end of the day?) and "reward value" (i.e. degree of satisfaction received in doing the activity) from both a user and staff point of view. After a few weeks, you should be able to estimate the relative amounts of staff time spent on each activity as well as which functions are most rewarding for staff and users.

For each potential candidate activity for computerization, you need to determine the following:

- Is this a task that computers do well (i.e. repetitive, quantitative, routine, voluminous, simple, logical, and straightforward)?
- Is software currently available to perform it?
- How visible is this task (the less visible, the better a candidate for computerization)?
- What user benefits does it offer? Will users be responsive/capable of using a computer to perform this function?
- Time and cost estimates — will it be cheaper in the long run to use a computer to perform this task?
- How well do your current manual methods work (including cost-effectiveness) and how much potential resistance might there be to changing it?

The chart on page 33 compares the projected cost of a computerized catalogue program and a traditional catalogue system over a two-year period. These costs are for 4000 library volumes and 1950 other materials (including educational kits, filmstrips, magazines, prints, films), based on an average salary of \$11.50/hour for a part-time library aid and full-time librarian.

While the example given illustrates a clear cost benefit over a four-year period, the decision to computerize will probably mean significant increases in short-term costs. It may be useful to go back to your original proposal for funding and justify these increased costs over a long-term period. Your immediate direct costs may be totally absorbed by a gradual decrease in longer term indirect costs (eg. your professional librarian's time spent in cataloguing duties).

Another example of a time-saving use for a micro-computer, this time with regards to Resource Centre users, is for book searches. Providing an up-to-date computerized inventory of your collection and clear instructions on how to conduct a search (on author, title, classification code, primary or secondary subject) can save your users a tremendous amount of time at the card catalogue.

## Deciding on Your Application(s)

There are three types of general purpose software that can be used in Resource Centres: word processing packages, file or database management systems, and spreadsheet and/or accounting programs. This section will briefly describe some possible applications of these software packages in terms of various library functions: acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, serials, reference, administration, and instruction. In addition to this software, a growing number of special purpose packages are now being designed specifically for libraries.

### WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE

Word processing software saves time and improves the quality of producing error-free copy and revised texts. It may be used in almost every aspect of library management, from compiling easily updated bibliographies and inventory lists to printing cards, writing year-end reports, and customizing form letters.

These programs require very little computer programming skill and can usually be learned in a few hours. Generally, the more functions and flexibility the program offers, the more difficult it is to learn.

Word processing packages are available for almost every kind of micro-computer. With so many good ones available, it is important to have a specific list of features in mind when shopping. Most vendors will give you demonstration copies to use when deciding which package best meets your specific needs.



## Cost Comparison of Manual and Computerized Catalogue Systems

	Four Year Costs for Conventional Card Catalogue Setup	Four Year Costs for Computer Catalogue Setup
Summer 1983 1000 titles	6 books/hr @ \$7.00/hr 166 hrs = \$ 1,162	30 books/hr @ \$7.00/hr 33 hrs = \$ 231
750 media	3 media/hr @ \$7.00/hr 250 hrs = \$ 1,750	30 media/hr @ \$7.00/hr 5 hrs = \$ 380
Winter/Spring 1984 1000 titles	6 books/hr @ \$11.50/hr 166 hrs = \$ 1,909	30 books/hr @ \$11.50/hr 33 hrs = \$ 380
500 media	3 media/hr @ \$11.50/hr 167 hrs = \$ 1,920	30 media/hr @ \$11.50/hr 17 hrs = \$ 196
Winter/Spring 1985 1000 titles	6 books/hr @ \$11.50/hr 166 hrs = \$ 1,909	30 books/hr @ \$11.50/hr 33 hrs = \$ 380
350 media	3 media/hr @ \$11.50/hr 116 hrs = \$ 1,334	30 media/hr @ \$11.50/hr 11 hrs = \$ 127
Equipment to do Cataloguing	Card Catalogue Furniture and Cards = \$ 2,000	Microcomputer, Hard Disk, Printer, Training = \$ 9,445
Totals	Conventional System Total = \$15,227	Computer System Total = \$11,441

### DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS SOFTWARE

A good database management system streamlines the mechanics of information storage and retrieval. Each data file is equivalent to a manual file drawer containing a set of records, uses the same format, and contains the same categories or fields of information. In terms of information retrieval, the difference is that, in a computerized file, records can be retrieved by any field (or piece) of information on the form, as opposed to only one heading (or piece) used in a manual file cabinet. Therefore, one record counts as

multiple records. An example of this is a program that allows the user to search for a book from a single inventory using any of the following search criteria: author, title, classification code, primary and secondary subject.

There are numerous possible applications for database management systems in a Resource Centre, the most obvious being: acquisitions processing, cataloguing, equipment inventory, circulation, serials control, reference, administration, and instruction.



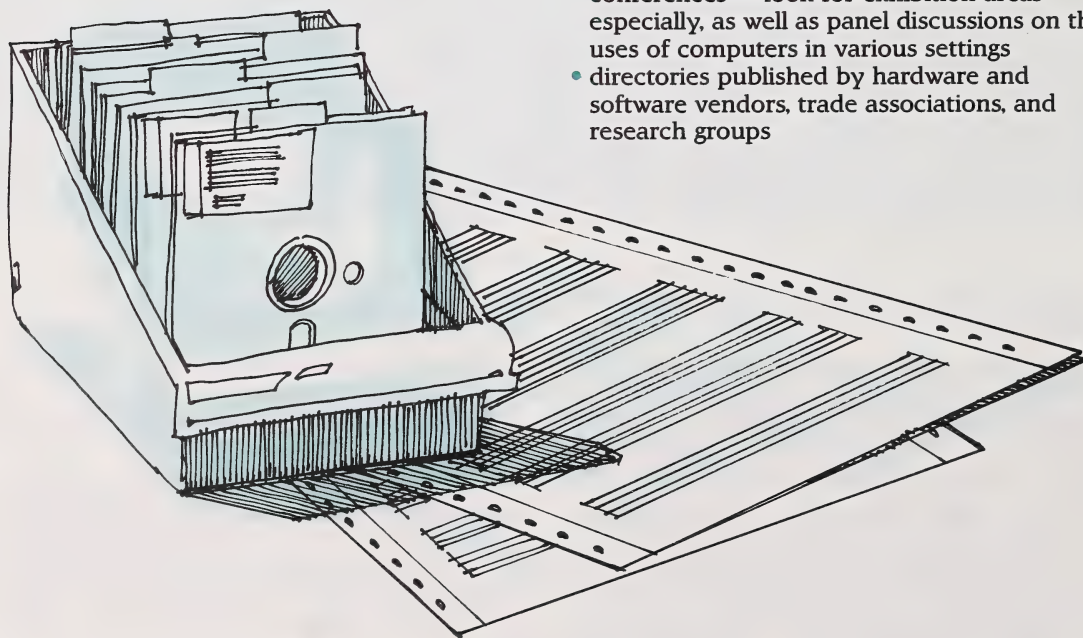
Since a number of database management systems were designed with programmers in mind, more complex programming skills can be, but are not always, needed to operate them. The more complex programs take longer to learn.

### SPREADSHEET PROGRAM SOFTWARE

Spreadsheet programs basically consist of rows and columns which intersect to form "cells," each of which can be used to store whatever data the user defines. These programs can be used for tallying and figure analysis, as well as for forecasting and "what-if" planning, since changing one variable automatically changes all related variables. Calculations that take hours or days done manually can be available in seconds with this software.

While commonly associated with financial planning and budgeting, these programs can also be used for: circulation statistics, collection usage, staff time distribution, and service analysis.

Spreadsheet programs require some time to learn, but usually do not require programming skills. The more commands/functions mastered, however, the more flexible and useful this kind of software becomes to your operations.



## Choosing the Right Software

The lack of commercially available software for libraries has resulted in some libraries custom designing their own programs. This can be a very expensive procedure that does not always result in the right answer — and can sometimes produce a "white elephant" that no one, other than the original programmer, can understand or operate.

For this reason, most small Resource Centres would be well advised to become involved in automation relatively inexpensively by purchasing ready-made packages.

## Obtaining Software

Some good general sources for locating information about and samples of quality software include:

- computer manufacturers
- other librarians and Resource Centres
- trade associations related to computer usage eg. Association of Computer Programmers and Analysts (US)
- trade publications — look for stories of successful computer installation in Resource Centres or libraries
- computer publications, eg. Computerworld, Datamation, Infosystems, Infoworld
- conferences — look for exhibition areas especially, as well as panel discussions on the uses of computers in various settings
- directories published by hardware and software vendors, trade associations, and research groups



## Evaluating Software

Software should be evaluated on the basis of two factors:

- Does it meet the general requirements of all good software?
- Does it meet the specific requirements of your Resource Centre setting?

Experienced software users suggest that the best way to select high quality software is to first prepare a shopping list of the features that you are looking for (eg. must be able to let the user know when incorrect data has been entered), then, if possible, see the system in operation where you can talk to current users.

Evaluating from the inside out also means that you should look carefully at its documentation, warranty, and operational characteristics, as well as all the costs involved in the installation of the system in your site. The following checklist can serve as a guideline in this process:

*Documentation* — the manuals that come with the software should include:

- Overview — does it clearly explain all available options?
- Instruction section — does it take you step-by-step through the program with sample screens, files, reports, etc.?
- Technical section — is there enough information in it to allow you to modify the program to suit your needs?
- Index — is it thorough?
- Troubleshooting guide — does it include error codes? help documentation?
- Written in English — is it easy to understand?
- Newsletter — is there a free one? Does it tell about updates, bugs, case studies, etc.?

*Warranty* — should include the following:

- Money-back guarantee or at least a minimum or limited warranty
- Replacement of defective storage media
- Fixing bugs during warranty period
- Updates at no cost
- Guarantee to run on your hardware
- Local service
- Hot-line for questions

*Software* — should be “friendly” by having the following features:

- Menu-driven — does it display all your options in a self-explanatory way?
- English language prompts — does it tell you in plain English what to do next?
- Error-traps — does the computer reject obviously wrong data?

- Flexible — do you have a lot of options or is there only one way of doing things?
- Automatic defaults — do you have to specify every available option each time you run the system?
- Rapid sorting — does a single entry automatically update all affected subsystems?
- On-line inquiry — can you display any file or record contained in the data base and get a hard copy if needed?
- Report generator — can you create new reports without using programmers to make the changes?
- Audit trail — are transactions easy to trace for human errors?
- Modifiable — can you (or will the vendor) modify the package as needed?

*Cost* — to consider in the whole purchase price:

- Basic software package
- On-line processing — if connected to a mini or mainframe system
- Modules that can be added on for extra functions
- Modifications to either update the package or tailor it to better suit your needs
- Maintenance of system on a continual basis

## Future Trends

The rapid reduction in hardware costs (with incumbent increase in powerfulness) and the development of fourth generation languages (which make programs easier to write) are serving to make micros a natural next equipment purchase for more and more small-to-medium sized Resource Centres.

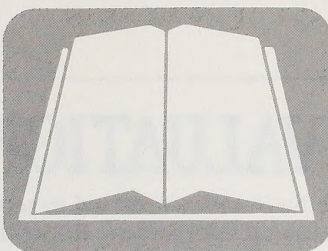
A logical next step in the use of micros in these settings is for the various single functions and systems to be integrated so they perform in much the same way that mini and mainframe computers now operate. Such integration can take place by producing many compatible software packages for one micro system or by connecting various micro systems so they “talk” to each other. This would mean that, in addition to the library functions already discussed in this guide, micros could be used to improve all kinds of user services: inter-library loan, electronic messaging, Telidon-type access, as well as information and referral services, for example.

The potential uses of this remarkable tool are limited only by the imagination and inventiveness of its owners!









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# EVALUATION

This guide has attempted to cover the basic issues involved in setting up a Resource Centre specializing in career planning materials and information. Hopefully, the ideas presented here will be helpful in a number of ways, from organizing a resource corner in a small school library to coordinating the creation of a new, fully funded resource library for use by an entire community.

In the interests of producing as useful a guide as possible, Career Information Services would appreciate hearing your impressions of this document. Feel free to add any comments necessary to further clarify your responses.

**A. Content (topics covered):**

- What is missing or should be left out?

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**B. Readability**

- Is it readable and easy to understand (appropriate reading level, terminology, tone)?

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**C. Format**

- Are more illustrations needed (where and what kind)?

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Please complete and return the Evaluation sheet to:

Career Information Services  
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201 Sun Building  
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Thank you.





N.L.C. - B.N.C.  
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